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Cuban Lesson Reflected by 'New' Kennedy

President Now 'Probes, Re-Probes Every Argument on Any Issue

The last in a series of articles by The Times' White House reporter on President Kennedy and his closest advisers.

BY ROBERT THOMPSON, Times Washington Bureau
PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Kennedy stands ready this week to resume nuclear testing in the atmosphere confident that he and his trusted band of White House skeptics had explored every avenue of debate before the fateful decision was made.

Mr. Kennedy and his inner circle of advisers are certain one year after the Cuban catastrophe that they have employed fully the major lesson of that tragic episode.

Cuba did not teach the President how to make only wise decisions. But it did teach him not to make any decision without having believed the men who advise Mr. Kennedy's counsel have a fuller realization of how important it is to consider "the President's interest" in the decision-making process. Cuba imparts upon them, said Bundy, that the President is one of the most powerful single forces that the government has.

Fewer Decisions

Another of Bundy's experts 10/11/63 explained: "Since the President has attracted his operation, there are fewer people with confidence in him. He also has a har-

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Taylor Fills Gap

Bundy's most articulate and learned individual states the reason for the change in the simplest of terms.

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was that of Chester Bowles, Mr. Kennedy's 1960 campaign adviser on foreign policy, from undersecretary of state to roving ambassador. Bowles' transfer was at least indirectly the result of the Cuban affair.

Bowles incurred the ire of both the President and his brother, Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy. During the week of turmoil over Cuba by attempting in talks with reporters to divorce the State Department from responsibility for the operation. Robert Kennedy bluntly informed Bowles that he was as much a part of the Cuban failure as the rest of the men who sat in on its planning.

Barrier Removed

In the November personnel shift, Richard Goodwin, an aggressive young attorney who had been Mr. Kennedy's Latin American adviser in the White House, was sent to the State Department. As one of the Kennedy insiders explained: "He was considered a barrier in the White House."

Walt Whitman Rostow, an intellectual who deals in grandiose ideas and prose, was shifted from his role as Bundy's assistant to the job he long had wanted — head of policy planning in the State Department.

Fred Dutton, the bright assistant to Gov. DeWitt in Sacramento, was shifted from his post as cabinet secretary and given a more active job as congressional liaison operator at the State Department.

Much Like F.D.R.

Mr. Kennedy in the White House is much like F.D.R. in that he never has staff meetings, is totally accessible to his advisers, and possesses an insatiable curiosity that always makes him demand all available information — and still call for more.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., a Presidential assistant who rode out the Cuban storm successfully, told me that Mr. Kennedy's management of the White House is much like the late Franklin D. Roosevelt's.

Schlesinger, who has written three books in his projected six-volume biography of Roosevelt, explained that Mr. Kennedy is like F.D.R. in that he never has staff meetings, is totally accessible to his advisers, and possesses an insatiable curiosity that always makes him demand all available information — and still call for more.

Mistaken Ideas

Mr. Kennedy was spread too thin prior to Cuba, in that he was involved in too many matters that did not merit his time.

Mr. Kennedy's habit of telling whatever is on his mind to whomever happens to be in the room with him also caused considerable difficulty early in his administration and particularly during the Cuban era. Assistants not used to the President's mode of operation thought that he meant for them to act on matters when he mentioned it to them.

There were some bruised feelings and hurt egos before some of his aides

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